

The Virgin Islands Consortium

New Report Finds Traces Of Herbicide In Cheerios And Quaker Oats Said To Increase Risk Of Cancer In Children

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The Environmental Working Group, an environmental research and advocacy organization, said on Wednesday that it has found traces of a controversial herbicide in Quaker Oats, Cheerios and other breakfast foods that it says could increase the risk of cancer in children.

Environmental Working Group said it tested 45 samples of breakfast foods made from oats grown in fields sprayed with herbicides. Then, using a strict standard the group developed, it found elevated levels of glyphosate in 31 of them.

“There are levels above what we could consider safe in very popular breakfast foods,” said Alexis Temkin, Environmental Working Group's toxicologist who helped with the analysis in the report.

The report comes as the debate about the safety of glyphosate, which federal regulators maintain is not likely to cause cancer, continues to rage.

Yet determining whether the pesticide is safe has been an argument that has continued for years, with multiple research in support and against the [chemical being birthed as a result. The new report has also seen wide circulation in the media](#), including a piece on CNN.

Both Quaker Oats and General Mills, which makes Cheerios, said that their products were safe and met federal standards. “While our products comply with all safety and regulatory requirements, we are happy to be part of the discussion and are interested in collaborating with industry peers, regulators and other interested parties on glyphosate,” a Quaker spokesman said Wednesday.

A General Mills spokeswoman told The Times, “Our products are safe and without question they meet regulatory safety levels.”

In an interview with The Times on Wednesday, Scott Partridge, a vice president at Monsanto, said that hundreds of studies had validated the safety of glyphosate and that it doesn't cause cancer. He called the Environmental Working Group an activist group.

“They have an agenda. They are fear mongering. They distort science,” he said.

Even so, a 2015 decision by the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer declared glyphosate, which prevents plants from photosynthesizing, a probable carcinogen. The classification prompted a federal case in the U.S. and [prompted California to declare glyphosate a chemical that is known to cause cancer](#).

Some research points to other potential health effects of glyphosate, including a study published last year in Scientific Reports, a journal from the publishers of Nature, which showed rats that consumed very low doses of glyphosate each day showed early signs of fatty liver disease within three months, which worsened over time.

Yet many regulators and researchers maintain that glyphosate is safe. And a recent major study, published by researchers at the National Institutes of Health, “observed no associations between glyphosate use and overall cancer risk.”

In December 2017, the federal Environmental Protection Agency issued a draft human health risk assessment that said glyphosate was most likely not carcinogenic to humans. According to an E.P.A. spokesman, the federal agency is currently reviewing public comments on that assessment as part of a standard review, and will decide on whether or not the agency needs any “mitigation measures” by 2019.

The United States Food and Drug Administration, which regulates domestic and imported food to make sure it does not exceed levels set by the E.P.A., said that based on 2016 samples, it had not found any violations of E.P.A. standards with glyphosate. An F.D.A. spokesman has said more recent samples are still under review, and that it would

consider the Environmental Working Group's findings.

Feature Image: Glyphosate, the primary ingredient in the weed killer Roundup and one of the most widely used herbicides in agriculture.

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